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REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, and 5 are pending in the application. Claim 1 has been amended by the present amendment. The amendment is fully supported by the specification as originally filed (see, e.g., page 21, last paragraph to page 22, first paragraph).

Claims 1, 4, and 5 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,920,758 to Ohtsuki in view of U.S. Patent 5,513,839 to Green. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In the "Response to Arguments" section of the Final Office Action, it was stated that the following provision is not present in the claims: "a shifter mechanism that allows for grasping and removal of sorted copies of printed sheets from either the front or the side of the image forming apparatus" (see Final Office Action, page 5, first paragraph). As amended, claim 1 incorporates this feature.

According to claim 1 (as amended), the shifter mechanism discharges printed sheets in different sheet delivery positions, and one side and the front of the apparatus are open to the exterior, allowing a user to grasp and remove discharged printed sheets (sorted copies) from either the open front or side of the apparatus (see specification at page 21, last paragraph to page 22, first paragraph).

The above-recited structure and function is neither taught nor suggested by the combination of Ohtsuki in view of Green. As indicated in the Final Office Action, Ohtsuki does not teach or suggest a shifter mechanism. Even if the offsetting function taught by Green were somehow combined with Ohtsuki, the proposed combination still would not teach or suggest an arrangement for grasping and removing sorted copies of printed sheets from either the front or the side of the image forming apparatus, as recited in claim 1.

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Moreover, Ohtsuki teaches away from the claimed arrangement by providing a supporting member 400 or 400' (see FIGS. 1 and 4), which would obstruct grasping and removal of any discharged printed sheets.

It is believed that the claims are in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

EDWARDS & ANGELL, LLP

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By: 

Steven M. Jensen
(Reg. No. 42,693)

P.O. Box 55874
Boston, MA 02205

Phone: (617) 439-4444

Customer No. 21874